

***Veratrum insolitum* Jeps.**

Siskiyou false-hellebore
Liliaceae (Lily Family)

Status: State Threatened

Rank: G3G4S1

General Description: Robust, rhizomatous perennial 40 to 68 in. (10 to 17 dm) tall. The stems are covered with tangled, woolly hairs. The egg-shaped leaves, which are up to 9 in. (23 cm) long, have prominent veins. There are 3 sepals and 3 petals. The clustered flower heads are many-branched and comprised of numerous gray, woolly flower stalks. The flowers are yellowish-white and have a fringed calyx. The ovary is woolly and bears a woolly, oblong capsule.

Identification Tips: Stems are grayish-green with long, woolly hairs above. Sepals and petals have a distinct hair-fringed margin, while the ovary and capsule are densely woolly. This varies from the pubescence of *V. viride*, which is glabrous below to short and woolly above with a toothed perianth. All measurements of the Washington population of *V. insolitum* are larger than noted in Hitchcock(1964), according to records from 1982.

Phenology: The species flowers from July through September. The only recorded population in Washington was flowering in early July.

Range: *Veratrum insolitum* occurs mostly in southwest Oregon and northwestern California. It is peripheral and disjunct in Klickitat County, Washington, where there is only one known population.

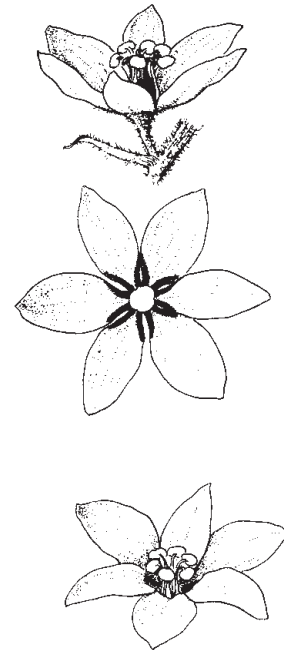
Habitat: Openings in thickets and mixed-evergreen forest on red clay in elevations greater than 900 ft. In Washington, it was found on an open, rocky slope at 1300 ft in elevation.

Ecology: This wetland wildflower is highly toxic to both humans and livestock. According to an article by the California Native Plant Society, "flour ground from the rhizomes of corn-lilies poisoned some of the members of the Lewis & Clark expedition. They probably mistook it for the edible camas (*Camassia quamash*)". *Veratrum* are one of the first plants to appear in early spring and therefore can be hazardous to livestock if other forage is unavailable.

State Status Comments: It is estimated that there are fewer than 50 plants in the state of Washington.

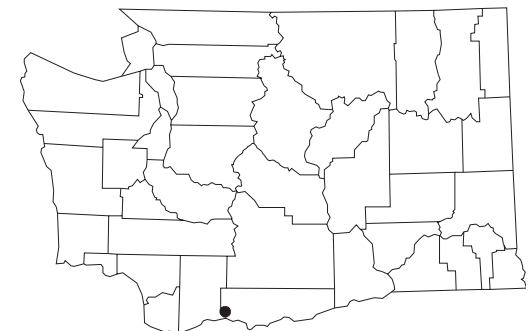
Veratrum insolitum

Siskiyou false-hellebore



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Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish

Known distribution of
Veratrum insolitum
in Washington



- Current (1980+)
- Historic (older than 1980)

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Washington Natural Heritage Program Photo



Photo by Ed Alverson

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Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed, particularly in Klickitat County.

Threats and Management Concerns: Unknown, although timber harvest, herbicides, grazing, horticultural collections, or trampling could affect the population.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1964. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams Gymnosperms and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 914 pp.

Leppig, G. August 29, 2002. North Coast Chapter, California Native Plant Society. "Cyclops and the Corn-lily." <http://www.northcoast.com/~cnps/darling/artw97a.htm>.